

Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District
2490 Main Road – Tiverton, RI 02878 – Phone (401) 816-5667

ERICD Board Meeting
December 11, 2013
7:00 PM

Please Note: The regular ERICD Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at 7PM was re-scheduled to Wednesday, December 11, 2013 at 7PM due to a scheduling conflict for the District Manager.

Chairman Emerson Wildes called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

Present were: ERICD Directors: Emerson Wildes, Richard Hart, Suzanne Hourihan; District Manager: Jessica Blackledge; Public: Will Walker, Russ Smith, and Richard St. Aubin

- I. Minutes:** Minutes from the November 12, 2013 ERICD Board meeting were presented. The District Manager (DM) asked the Chair to provide more information on the proceedings of the Executive Session of November 12, 2013 so she may add those details to the November minutes prior to recording. Suzanne made a motion to table action on the November meeting minutes until the January meeting pending revision. Richard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- II. Financial Report:** A written Financial Report was presented. Suzanne made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented. Richard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- III. NRCS Report & Staff Presentation:** A written report was presented. Melissa was unable to attend this month's meeting. A staff presentation will be provided at the January meeting.
- IV. RISCC Report:** Minutes of the November RI SCC meeting were provided. Emerson reported on SCC activity and NRCS State Technical Team issues reported by Phou.
- V. District Reports:**
 - A. District Manager:** A written Report was provided. Highlights of the DM Report and Board activity on same are as follows:
 - 1. Geese:** DM continues to develop new and existing partnerships, provides assistance and recommendations to landowners as needed and continues outreach and volunteer development for the 2014 field season. DM will be attending and presenting the Geese project at the Save the Lakes meeting on December 10th.
 - 2. NRCS Outreach:** ERICD's next Conservation Open House workshop in conjunction with this agreement. The workshop will be on January 22, 2014 from 5 to 7PM This event will be hosted by Mount Hope Farm and held in the Barn.
 - 3. FFOS:** DM assisted six local landowners with FFOS Farmland Applications. No FFOS Farm Conservation Plans were written this month; however the Ag Tech has a site visit and plan development scheduled for December 11th. DM will continue writing FFOS plan as work as available and necessary.
 - 4. AFA Conference:** DM attended the American Farmland Advisor's Conference in Albany, NY on November 18th & 19th. She stated that she found it to be a very valuable experience; she learned much, made many new connections and looks forward to using and sharing what she has learned.
 - B. Chair Report:** Emerson reported that he had withdrawn all funds and closed the ERICD account at Sovereign Bank in accordance with the direction of the Board (see meeting minutes from November 12, 2013). Emerson provided the DM with a check of the balance in the

Sovereign account and requested that she deposit it in ERICD's Bank Newport checking account (per the Board decision on November 12, 2013).

C. Directors Reports:

- 1. Richard:** Reported attending the URI Fruit Growers Meeting at Sweetberry Farm which included an informational session on crop insurance and a pruning demonstration. Richard also reported on upcoming events such as regional fruit growers and vegetable grower conferences, workshops, etc.
- 2. Suzanne:** Nothing to report.

VI. Old Business:

- A. Tiverton Harbor Commission Request:** Emerson reported that he had approached the landowner the Tiverton Harbor Commission had requested ERICD offer assistance to regarding his livestock operation. Emerson offered ERICD and NRCS assistance. A brief discussion regarding the THC's request and concerns related to their methods followed.

Richard made a motion to respond to the THC in writing stating that ERICD has approached the landowner and has offered assistance if needed. Additionally, ERICD would like to recommend to the THC that this issue be addressed with using watershed-base and community based approaches and that ERICD would be amenable to partnering with THC to achieve those approaches.

B. Town Funding Requests:

- 1. Tiverton Contribution for 2013:** The DM reported receiving a \$500 funding contribution from the Town of Tiverton for the 2013/2014 fiscal year. This check was deposited in the Bank Newport account on 11/23/13
- 2. 2014 Request Letter Development:** ERICD's Town Funding Request letter was delivered to the town of Tiverton electronically on 11/15/13 and in hard copy on 11/20/13

- C. ERICD Seat on the SCC:** The SCC informed DM that a résumé need not be developed at this point. A letter stating Emerson's interest in continuing to serve on the SCC Board and his willingness to present a résumé upon request would suffice. This letter was developed by the DM and signed by Emerson on 11/26/13 and delivered to Ramona for submission to the Governors' office.

- D. Board Recruitment Follow-up Activity Completed by Board Members:** Suzanne reported calling all three candidates and leaving messages. Thus far, none have returned her call. She agreed to call once more.

E. Funding Opportunities:

- 1. Fee for Service Proposals:** Nothing to report this month.
- 2. Organic Farm Certification:** DM reported she spoke with a member of NOFA regarding their interest in pursuing this opportunity. It seems, from these conversations, that NOFA is not necessarily pursuing this opportunity. More discussion with partners at NOFA and DEM is needed and will be conducted on this topic and others in the coming months. Emerson stated that he will speak to Skip Paul regarding this topic in the next month.

- F. Operational Strategy Development to Reduce/Eliminate Expected 2014 Budget Shortfalls & Report to the SCC:** Nothing to report this period.

- G. Lease:** Nothing to report this period.

H. 8 Rod Management Plan: Nothing to report this month. This item will be discussed with DEM along with other opportunities in the coming months.

VII. New Business

A. RI SCC Personnel Subcommittee: This is a permanent SCC Subcommittee created to provide guidance and oversight of SCC Personnel matters. This subcommittee will be a standing committee and will meet when there are matters, such as hiring new SCC staff, review of personnel procedures, etc. that may require its attention as requested by the RI SCC Board. The items addressed in SCC Personnel Subcommittee meetings could include: reviewing, making recommendations on and updating SCC/ District Personnel Policies and Procedures, reviewing candidates responding to Requests for Proposals (RFP's) and potential new employees, participation in the interview process, development of position & RFP announcements, etc.

The DM reported that this is an opportunity for the ERICD to participate in the selection of SCC staff, contractors, development of personnel policy and procedures and strengthening the resource that is the District's partnership with and membership in the SCC. If the ERICD does not participate in this subcommittee we will be missing important opportunities to provide ERICD perspective and guidance in relation to SCC Personnel issues. There is still time to select an ERICD Board Member or Associate Member to sit on this subcommittee

B. NACD Did You Know Board Self-Evaluation – Requested by D. Went, NACD Treasurer: Recently the NACD “Did You Know” listserve sent a Board Self-Evaluation. At the FFOS Subcommittee meeting on December 9th Dick Went, Treasurer of NACD and Chair of the RIACD requested that each District Board take time at their next Board Meeting to complete this evaluation. The ERICD Board completed this self-evaluation tool during the meeting and provided their responses to the DM for tabulation and discussion at the January meeting.

C. Special Project Ideas:

- 1. Community Garden Project with Sandywoods Farm:** Various conversations between the DM, Ron Mucci and Sandywoods Farm have resulted in the desire to develop a project that supports community gardening in the local area. Jessica had the need for some garden space and I was happy to offer such on my farm where there is also high tunnel facilities, irrigation, composting, etc. This led to the possibility of Jessica or even better ERICD acquiring a community garden plot at Sandywoods Farm where Jessica and the board members could offer to share our gardening experience with others having plots at Sandywoods Farm. This led to the possibility of offering presentations not only to those with garden plots at Sandywoods, but also invite the public. We could easily draw in presenters from Tiverton and Little Compton garden clubs, NRCS, URI MasterGardeners, Bristol Community College, individuals like, Michael and Kelli of Roots (organic) Farm, Derick Christianson of Brix Bounty (organic) Farm, Tiverton Land Trust, there is no shortage of good presenters. This program also has the potential to greatly benefit the community garden and agricultural programs at Sandywoods.

A possible description of this potential ERICD/ Sandywoods Community Garden Education Project 2014 growing season with future possibilities depending on 2014 growing season success and feedback is as follows: The goal/objective of this project would be to reach out to the district's community with real, on the ground agricultural and environmental educational opportunities.

This project would require ERICD and Sandywoods Farm to form a partnership with the ERICD being the primary source of personnel (staff, board members and volunteers) required, Sandywoods would provide the facilities (garden plot and room to

accommodate presentations). There may also be a potential here for NRCS involvement/ partnership.

It is anticipated that very little funding would be required for the first growing season but is there the possibility of grant dollars to expand this project in subsequent years to include, for example, the addition of how to extend the growing season with tunnels by assisting Sandywoods with their NRCS high tunnel project among others. Workshop or educational assistance topics could include gardening practices, soil health, garden pest control, food nutrition, pollination and pollinators, sustainability, seed starting, seed saving, working with NRCS, etc. etc.

We might also add to this the possibility of presenting documentary films related to relevant environmental topics, for example, Food, inc., The Movie Dirt, The Real Dirt on Farmer John, etc. This has been discussed in the past at the board meetings. These could potentially be shown at Sandywoods.

The ERICD Board requested the DM pursue further investigation of the potential for this project in the coming months.

D. Board Candidacy Policy: DM reported that two ERICD Board Candidates are wondering if an ID that has an associated Federal Background check associated with obtaining said ID would fulfill the BCI requirement of Board Candidacy. DM requested that the Board accept any ID that has a Federal Background Check associated with it as these ID's have a higher level of scrutiny than a simple BCI and, therefore, fulfill the basic BCI requirement. Suzanne made a motion to accept IDs that have an associated Federal background check in lieu of a state BCI. Richard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourned at 9:46 PM

Next Meeting: January 14, 2014 at 7:00pm